Superior Central School District P.O. Box 148 Eben Jct., Michigan 49825 906-439-5531

January 10, 2004

Dear State Board of Education Members:

Superior Central is a small, rural, declining enrollment district located in the Upper Peninsula. The district was formed in 1987 through the consolidation of two districts, covers 230 square miles, and has a student count of 376. Of the 376 students, 57 (over 15%) are choosing to attend our district through schools of choice.

Funding for public education in Michigan is at an extremely critical point. For the past two years, we have seen no increase in funding; instead have seen prorations to the per pupil foundation allowance well into the school year. While this school fiscal year (2004-05) has not yet seen a proration, the foundation allowance remains at \$6,700 per pupil, the same as it was in 2003-04 and 2002-03. In addition, schools have yet to actually receive the full amount of the foundation allowance, though hopefully this will occur this year. Well into the prior two years, we received a proration reducing the actual amount we received, and then were told that the next year that we would receive an increase – back to \$6,700 per pupil.

There is definitely a need for a structural change in the mechanism of public school funding yet instead of addressing the issue – lack of revenue – the solution continues to be prioritize and make cuts. At this point we at Superior Central have exhausted this option and are at a point where additional cuts will result in a direct negative impact on students and curriculum.

Over the past three years we have addressed the shortfall in funding by making the following reductions:

- Reductions in bus runs we now have students riding busses for up to and sometimes exceeding 3 hours per day (90 minutes in the morning and again in the afternoon)
- Reduction in media center (library) services
- Elimination of the transportation supervisor position (now the responsibility of the superintendent)
- Elimination of the Elementary Principal (now the responsibility of the superintendent)

- Layoff of all custodial staff and contracting with a private company for these services
- Elimination of one high school math teaching position
- Elimination of two-thirds of a high school language arts teaching position
- Reduction of the K-12 art teacher to one-half time, thus eliminating elementary art
- Elimination of one elementary teaching position
- Elimination of one-third of the food service staff and a reduction in hours for the remaining staff
- Reduction of building maintenance position to part time
- Elimination of the superintendent's secretary
- Elimination of all student field trips unless financially supported by another group or organization
- A pay freeze for the superintendent since 2002-03
- Postponing the purchase of new school busses since 2002 (we are still utilizing busses as old as 1987 with over 200,000 miles on them to transport our students)
- Early retirement incentives were offered in the spring of 2003 and 2004

While these decisions are being made at the local level, additional mandates and responsibilities continue to be added to public schools. A current and major issue here is No Child Left Behind and highly qualified teachers. Somewhere at the State level, someone needs to be willing to step up to bat for our youth and address revenues. Without structural change and without addressing the revenue side of the equation, it will be impossible to meet the needs of the youth in State and provide them with a quality education to prepare them for leading us into the future.

Our current youth are our leaders of the future and will be making the decisions that will directly impact each and every one of our lives. It is time to seriously address the needs of public education and our State as a whole to enable Michigan to be a leader in the future. The federal law states "No Child Left Behind," and unless we address the costs of leaving no child behind, we will all be left behind.

I am asking that you immediately begin to address the structural issues of funding public education in Michigan to make our State a leader now and into the future.

Should this inspire some new thoughts or should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at any time.

Sincerely,

William H. Lammi Superintendent wlammi@maresa.k12.mi.us